

opinion/editorial

Intoxication bill evades helping problem drinkers

It is unfortunate lawmakers often prefer to shield themselves from confronting problems head on by stiffening penalties instead of seeking solutions.

Such is the case with state Sen. Sam Cullan's introduction of a bill in the Legislature this year to make public drunkenness a crime.

According to the bill, an intoxicated person could be arrested by a law enforcement officer without a warrant. The person then could be held until the officer filed a complaint and a warrant was issued. The penalty for public drunkenness could be up to three months in jail, a \$500 fine, or both.

Public drunkenness was decriminalized in Nebraska in 1977. The reason expressed at the time was the realization that people with drinking problems need to be helped, not punished.

The Legislature took steps positive steps toward helping individuals who have drinking problems when they passed another bill in 1980 to aid alcohol treatment centers.

According to present law, police can hold an intoxicated person in custody for up to 12 hours, take the person home, to a hospital or to a treatment center. These are sound, humane methods of helping people

who may have drinking problems.

Cullan, however, doesn't think the treatment programs or centers have been effective in helping solve what he views as a serious problem.

The senator from Hemingford maintains a lot of crime that occurs is alcohol-related. He said, "Hauling people in before they do something more is preventing more serious crime."

Although Cullan makes these statements in defense of his proposal to make public drunkenness a crime again in Nebraska, it does just the opposite and further substantiates the necessity of going to the core of the problem: that is, helping people deal with drinking problems.

If Cullan's bill passes and public drunkenness is returned to the lawbooks as a crime, the state stands to lose up to \$250,000 in federal funds for alcohol treatment centers.

Losing that money, and in turn the facilities to help people, would be unfortunate because we then would have individuals with problems who would not have any place to go for help, but instead would have criminal records.

For some reason, that just doesn't seem like a very responsible approach to dealing with a social problem.

Winter's sordid facts of life return columnist to basics

Boston I am sitting in my kitchen trying to be profound. I am, however, willing to settle for being coherent.

I have discovered that it is extremely difficult to ponder the state of the world while my breath is crystallizing in the air above the table.

I am, you see, yet another victim of the natural gas emergency in Boston. It has sent me back to basics—the basics of keeping warm at 55 degrees.

goodman

In my own winter wonderland, I am wearing the following items of clothing: thigh-high wool socks, down slippers, a flannel nightgown that will never be seen in an ad for Frederick's of Hollywood, a crew-neck sweater, a down vest. I have taken off my mittens in order to hold onto my coffee cup. I refuse for the sake of dignity to put on my ski cap before 4 p.m.

Even before this emergency, the citizens of New England, circa 1980-81, were experiencing a revival of the Puritan spirit. We were learning to understand the atmosphere in which our eccentric, arthritic, righteous, upright ancestors built a philosophy of endurance.

Maybe the people of Florida were chipping off ice from their oranges, but we—the hardier folk of New England—were chipping it off our children. Hosanna!

These were some of the sordid facts of life this winter.

More people in the Northeast used hair-dryers on their pipes than on their curls.

The average plumber was booked until Easter.

The mouse which lived in my wall moved to another house. It has a wood stove.

My car learned to laugh sardonically when I turned the ignition.

At any given moment, 10 percent of the population was waiting for the Godots of the eighties: (1) the oil company, (2) the gas company, (3) the car mechanic.

But now I look back on those as the good old days.

One night last week, the governor offered an upbeat speech about our state. We the citizens sat wrapped in quilts watching him like a creature from another latitude. By 12 o'clock, the Bay Colony had run out of degrees.

The next day we started running out of gas. The temperature outside went up, the heat wave went to 20 degrees while the temperatures inside went down.

The natural gas emergency was brought on by nature and mismanagement. But the warning was out: Turn down today or freeze tomorrow. Even the gas-heated schools closed, thereby giving our children more time to spend in their nice cozy kitchens.

By the weekend, those of us who had chortled at our neighbors' oil bills were trying to book space in their attics. Those who were sure the oil crisis in the summer of 1979 was a plot were sure the gas crisis in the winter of 1981 was a ploy. The only things generating heat in my neighborhood were conspiracy theories.

I am, however, thinking of a solution. After a 24-hour tour of sunny, steam-heated New York City, I returned to the Boston airport to find a line of people, three deep. They were all desperately trying to buy the half-price Eastern coupons to California.

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Stamp out pesty personals

I guess it was inevitable. Once again at the start of this semester, I harbored secret, but vain, hopes that our campus newspaper wouldn't be burdened and scandalized with those disgraceful attempts at journalism.

Yes, the Daily Nebraskan must again suffer through a semester of personals.

warneke

I have to force myself to turn to the last page of the paper and scan the seemingly endless advertisements. When I think of the time wasted creating personals, vivid images flash through my mind. A student goes home at the end of a semester and his parents ask him if he got the grades to get into medical school. He says, "No, but I sure wrote a lot of good personals."

There have been many trends in the personals from the "rock vs. disco" and "greek vs. dorm" verbal wars to the current "I saw you in the Union, I smiled and you got sick. Please call 466-1017 if interested."

But the most persistent of the trends has to be the one using percentages: "90 percent of all people at UNL are actual human beings, the other 10 percent are journalism majors." Brutal, but to the point.

I have to admit I was once the subject of a personal and it did include percentages. I really don't like to think about it, but it went something like, "98 percent of

the UNL women are sexually active, the other 2 percent know Kent Warneke."

What made it even worse was that my engineer (gearhead in layman's terms) roommate mathematically computed it and told me the correct percentage was actually 1.97564. I told him to go play in the bathtub with an electric slide rule.

But it seems that no matter how much I or anyone may rant and rave, we're destined to have personals. They're something similar to an initiation into a fraternity—before you're a member of UNL, you have to have a personal about you in the newspaper. That brings about a rash of "Here is your personal, I told you I'd put it in for you. Now you owe me two bucks."

I would like to start a crusade to stamp out personals. Maybe I could recruit the football team and some ASUN senators to help guard the steps going down to the Daily Nebraskan. If the football team misses tackling people, the senators can bore them to death with rhetoric.

But I have to admit the real reason I don't like personals in the Daily Nebraskan is that I'm 100 percent positive they are read more often than this column.

nebraskan

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